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Bean, Clive and McAllister, Ian (2009) *The Australian election survey: the tale of the rabbit-less hat. Voting behaviour in 2007*. Australian Cultural History, 27(2). p. 205.

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**The Australian Election Survey:  
The Tale of the Rabbit-less Hat:  
Voting Behaviour in 2007**

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*Australian Cultural History*  
Special Issue, Vol. 27, No. 2, October 2009

**Abstract**

This paper examines voter attitudes and behaviour at the 2007 Australian federal election., using data from the Australian Election Study. It considers socio-demographic factors as well as the role of policy issues and voter evaluations of the party leaders. The paper concludes that issues, such as the government's WorkChoices policy, as well as health and leadership contributed to Labor's victory.

**Keywords:** voting behaviour; 2007 Australian election; issues; WorkChoices; leadership

Some months out from the Australian federal election of 2001 it appeared that the government of prime minister John Howard was under serious threat of losing. To a lesser extent, the same can be said of the 2004 election. On each occasion, however, the government pulled the proverbial rabbit out of the hat and engineered a turn-around of its fortunes. Thus, when the Howard government again appeared to be in electoral trouble in the lead up to the 2007 election, pundits were cautious about predicting its demise. In the end, however, there was no rabbit to be found in the hat this time and the conservative Liberal-National party coalition government of over eleven years standing was soundly defeated by the Australian Labor Party under the leadership of Kevin Rudd.

As is invariably the case, a range of reasons for the defeat quickly arose after the election. For some the explanation lay in issues such as industrial relations, environmental concerns and interest rates, for others it was leadership, specifically the failure of the government to effect a leadership change prior to the election (Davis 2008). The analysis in this chapter suggests that some of these explanations have validity but not others. The evidence indicates that, as anticipated by many, controversy over the government's WorkChoices legislation meant that industrial relations played an important role in its defeat. Health and taxation, issues of perennial concern to voters, also had a significant impact on voting behaviour. Leadership was important as well, although a change of leadership from Howard to Peter Costello would have been highly unlikely to have helped the coalition's cause. The Labor Party's electoral fortunes were certainly boosted by the unusually high popularity of Rudd, yet Labor's advantage could have been even greater had voter evaluations of its leader translated into a stronger impact on individual electoral choice.

In the background, behind the factors that registered a significant direct effect on the vote, lay a number of shifts in the relationship between socio-demographic variables and party support which collectively could be regarded as amounting to a ‘normalising’ of electoral alignments in Australia following a period in which the coalition’s electoral dominance saw Labor’s support seriously undermined within groups that would normally favour it. But in 2007 there was a reaffirmation of support for the Labor Party among ‘heartland’ groups such as those in manual occupations, trade union members, members of the Catholic religious denomination and young voters.

### **Attitudes to the campaign**

By waiting until mid-October to call the election, the prime minister left himself little room to exercise any element of surprise. He made use of the little manoeuvring he could by having a six week campaign, the second time in a row that he had made it longer than the minimum of just under five weeks. The amount of public attention to the campaign was greater than in recent elections, presumably because of the prospect of a change of government. The Australian Election Study (AES) permits a comparison of public orientations to the campaign in recent elections (for details on the AES, which forms the basis of the analysis in this chapter, see the appendix).

Table 27.1 shows that 40% of the AES sample said they took ‘a good deal’ of interest in the 2007 election campaign overall, representing a sharp rise on the 30% recorded in 2004 and comparable to the 38% who showed similar levels of interest in 1998 - although still well below the level recorded in the fiercely contested election of 1993, when nearly half the electorate expressed a good deal of interest (Bean and McAllister 1997, 192-3). The proportion of people who ‘cared a good deal’ which party won the election also rose, but perhaps not by as much as might have been expected. In 2007,

76% said they cared a good deal, compared to 72% in 2004. Still, this is a large fraction of the electorate that feels strongly that the outcome matters.

[Table 27.1 about here]

The level of attention paid to the campaign in newspapers, television and radio increased as well and, as is consistently the case, television rated well above the other two mainstream media, followed by newspapers and then radio. We also included the internet in this question format for the first time, but it rated well behind the established media. The internet, though, is predictably growing as a medium for obtaining election news and information, as the next line in Table 27.1 shows. Since AES respondents were first asked whether they made use of the internet to get news or information about the election, in 1998, there has been an increase in those saying they did from 4% to 20% in 2007 (, 6% who and another 5% who used it many times), with quite a jump from 12% in 2004. In 2007, 5% said they used the internet many times for such purposes, with 6% saying they used it on several occasions and a further 9% using it once or twice.

Consistent with the earlier data in Table 27.1 more people (46%) said they watched the televised leaders' debate, held near the start of the campaign, than in the last two elections. Only a small percentage of the electorate (13%) thought Howard performed better than Rudd in the debate, with 60% awarding the contest to Rudd and a further 27% saying the two were about equal.

For some time there has been evidence that the numbers of voters leaving their final voting decision until into the election campaign is increasing in various democracies (McAllister 2002). What has become clear in Australia, however, is that this trend, which did occur in the 1990s, is now in reverse. The substantial decline from 39% in 2004 to 29% in 2007, shown in Table 27.2, puts the proportion of late-

deciding voters in Australia back to near the low levels of the 1980s (Bean and McAllister 1997, 194-5) and heading down towards the even lower levels of the 1970s (Kemp 1973, 282). In 2007, close to three-quarters of the electorate had made up their minds about how to vote before the campaign got under way, in many cases well before then (55% said they had decided 'a long time ago'). Similarly, the percentage saying that they seriously thought of giving their first preference vote in the House of Representatives to a different party from the one for which they eventually voted has also dropped back to low levels. When reflecting on the data on timing of vote decision and potential to waiver from the final vote choice, it is important to consider that there were almost certainly election-specific factors at play, which should produce some caution in interpreting the findings as indicating longer-term trends. Tired of a government in power for over eleven years, voters appear to have made up their minds to change many months before the election was called (as consistently reflected in opinion polls throughout 2007) and found no reason to reverse this decision during the campaign.

[Table 27.2 about here]

It is consistent with these findings that the slight decline in party identification observed in the late 1990s (Bean and McAllister 2000, 183) appears to have stalled. The percentage identifying with one of the major parties has remained at 77% for the last three elections after falling from over 80%. No more than one in six eschew a party identification altogether and the proportion of very strong party identifiers in fact seems to be on the rise, now up to a quarter of all party identifiers, from less than a fifth two elections ago. This reaffirmation of party identification within the Australian electorate, albeit at a lower baseline level than in the past, puts Australia at odds with many other countries, in which there has been a sustained decline in party

loyalties (White and Davies 1998; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Webb, Farrell and Holliday 2003).

The only indicator in Table 27.2 to go against the general message of reduced volatility and stabilised levels of partisanship is the proportion who reported that they had always voted for the same political party. The 45% giving this response is down from the 50% recorded in 2004. If this measure represents a genuine reflection by voters on their electoral choice over many years, this decline could be explicable by the rise and decline of a number of minor parties and independents over the last decade or so, for whom some members of the electorate may have voted once or twice, as well as the passing of the baton of the main third party in Australian politics from the Australian Democrats to the Greens.

### **Social structure and voting**

While relationships between social structure and voting are generally weaker than in the past, it remains of great interest to see the extent to which core socio-demographic indicators align with support for different political parties. In Table 27.3 we begin this process by considering gender, age, region and religion. Reviewing data from the last election, we reported that the traditional association between gender and party had disappeared (Bean and McAllister 2005, 323). This remains the case in 2007. Again in 2007, if anything the traditional pattern is reversed, with men now slightly more likely to vote for the Liberal or National parties than women. And as usual, the Greens derived slightly more support from women than from men.

[Table 27.3 about here]

In 2004, the Labor Party fared poorly among young voters, in a reversal of the more usual recent pattern (Bean and McAllister 2005, 323-4). Table 27.3 shows that in 2007 Labor's stocks were restored among young voters. This revival appears to



have come at the expense of both the coalition and the Greens to some extent, although the Greens still did relatively well among the two youngest age cohorts, as they usually do. The Liberal-National parties did progressively better among older age groups, while Labor did worse – again a reflection of usual patterns.

The moderate differentiation between urban and rural Australia normally observable in electoral data persisted in the 2007 AES. In combination, the coalition parties do better in rural Australia and the Labor Party does better in urban areas, with a differential of just under 10%. The Greens also do better in urban settings and, in 2007, other minor parties and independent candidates on average received a higher vote in rural electorates.

Some have argued that during the period of the Howard government's tenure, religion has gained a higher profile in Australian politics than for many decades prior (Warhurst 2007). The lower section of Table 27.3 shows that the traditional associations between different religious denominations and support for the major political parties were solidly in evidence in 2007. Labor did best among Catholics, 'other' religions and those with no religion, while the coalition did best among the major Protestant groups in the form of the Anglican and Uniting churches. Although such patterns are consistent features of Australian politics, what has differed in some recent elections is that, in a period of coalition electoral dominance, more Catholics have voted for the Liberal-National parties than for the Labor Party. In 2007, however, the 'old alliance between Catholics and Labor' (Warhurst 2007, 21) was restored, with 48% of Catholics voting Labor compared to 42% voting Liberal-National. The coalition did worst among those with no religion, which is where the Greens usually do best, as they did this time. This respective weakness and strength of the coalition and the Greens is predictably reflected among those who never attend

church while, in terms of church attendance, Labor fares least well among the most frequent attenders. But the patterns of party support for church attendance groups are not strongly demarcated in these data, save perhaps for other parties and candidates, who appear to be particularly popular with frequent churchgoers.

Turning to Table 27.4, we see that a tendency that has developed over the last few elections for university-educated voters not to support the coalition was reinforced in 2007. Only 33% of those with university degrees reported giving their first preference vote in the House of Representatives to the Liberal-National parties, while a significant 16% gave their vote to the Greens and 47% to Labor.

[Table 27.4 about here]

In recent elections the results for occupation and party support have varied, with the index of class voting (the non-manual vote for the Labor Party subtracted from the manual vote for Labor) moving from 10% to 17% to 9% over the last three federal elections (Bean and McAllister 2000, 180; 2005, 325). This volatility in the level of class voting continued in 2007, with the index measuring 15%. One of the features of the 2007 result is that for the first time for many elections a majority of voters from manual occupations voted for the Labor Party (55%). The return to a solid showing of support among its traditional electoral base is a strong indicator of the healthy state of Labor's revived electoral fortunes that underpinned its victory in the election. Among other things, this surge in support for Labor from manual workers helps account for the increase in the class voting index. Interestingly, there was a marked occupational effect in support for the Greens in 2007, with non-manual workers twice as likely as manual workers to register a vote for the Greens. This in turn served to depress the coalition vote among its traditional support base, so that appreciably less than half the non-manual group voted Liberal-National (46%).

Table 27.4 also shows that the self-employed strongly favoured the coalition parties, while government employees strongly favoured Labor. Trade union members were 23% more likely to vote Labor than non-members and less likely to vote for the coalition by a similar margin. The 63% of union members voting Labor is the largest proportion recorded in the AES for many elections and is another indicator of the reaffirmation of support for Labor among its electoral heartland.

### **The issue agenda**

One of the themes in recent electoral research on Australia has been that issues matter (Goot and Watson 2007). While this may seem self-evident to many, the conventional wisdom of academic political science of two to three decades ago was that election campaigns, and by implication the policy issues that were debated in them, made very little difference to the winning and losing of elections (see, for example, Aitkin 1982). As indicated in the introduction, post-election accounts pointed to the role of various policy issues that may have affected the outcome of the 2007 election, including interest rates, industrial relations and the environment. Table 27.5 lists fourteen prominent election issues together with the percentage of AES sample members saying the issues were extremely important to them when they were deciding about how to vote. The top rating issue will come as no surprise to anyone who has followed Australian elections closely over the last decade or more. Repeatedly, and irrespective of whether the parties make it a central focus of their campaigns, the issue of health and Medicare is the issue of most concern to voters. And so it was in 2007, with 76% of all voters saying the issue was extremely important. For Labor voters the proportion went even higher, to 83%. Interestingly, next on the list was management of water (70% rated it extremely important), which sends a strong signal of voter concern over the growing problem in Australia and elsewhere of managing this scarce

resource. In recent elections, education has been near the top of the list of issue concerns and so it was again, ranking third behind health and water management (with 68% seeing it as extremely important and again more so for Labor voters).

[Table 27.5 about here]

No other issue had as many as 60% calling it extremely important, but next on the list came the environment, with 59%, and then further behind again global warming and industrial relations, for which 51% rated them as extremely important. All of these issues were of more concern to Labor than to Liberal-National voters. Predictably, the environment, global warming and management of water were of most concern to supporters of the Greens. Given the focus over an extended period of time leading up to the election on the government's WorkChoices program, it may seem a little surprising that industrial relations does not feature more strongly. However, these initial results on the importance attributed to issues is not always a good guide to which issues actually influenced electoral choice, as we see in the final section of the chapter.

Next in order of importance came interest rates and terrorism (on 43%), followed by defence and national security, then taxation together with unemployment (39%), the war in Iraq and finally immigration followed by treatment of Aborigines. This last result would seem to imply that concern for the plight of Indigenous Australians continues to be limited among the wider public, at least in relation to electoral politics. The only partial exception appears to be among Green voters, of whom 50% rated treatment of Aborigines as an extremely important issue. When we compare the supporters of the major parties across the range of issues, on most of the issues Labor voters expressed stronger concern than Liberal-National voters. Only on

the issues of tax, immigration, defence and terrorism did more coalition supporters rate the issues as important.

In the last column of Table 27.5 we have another set of figures which show the party differential on each of the fourteen issues (the percentage difference between those saying Labor's policies were closer to their own view and those saying the coalition's policies were closer). A plus sign indicates a Labor advantage and a negative sign a Liberal-National advantage on the issue. These data demonstrate very clearly that the Labor Party had a strong advantage over the coalition on most issues. On only five of the fourteen issues did the Liberal-National parties have an advantage and in all cases the margins were quite slim. On six of the other nine issues, the balance of voter opinion favoured the Labor Party by very substantial margins. Moreover, all of the issues that aroused most concern for voters also had a preponderance saying that Labor's policies were closer to their own views on the issue. Labor's largest advantage was on the issue of global warming (with a 38% differential in its favour), followed closely by the environment more broadly and then education. Labor also had substantial advantages on health and Medicare, industrial relations and the war in Iraq and led by lesser margins on management of water and treatment of Aborigines. Only on defence and national security, unemployment, interest rates, and terrorism did the coalition have an advantage of any measure and these were all issues that did not rate very highly among voter concerns. Neither party had an appreciable advantage on taxation or immigration.

### **Voter evaluations of the party leaders**

It is now well established that voter evaluations of party leaders play a consistently significant role in Australian elections, although there is little evidence of an increase in their impact over time (Senior and van Onselen 2008). Rather, the leadership

effects seem to vary according to the context of particular elections. While we have seen that certain policy issues were highly salient in the 2007 election campaign, there was also a strong focus on the leaders, partly because of the interest that developed in the performance of the new Labor leader, Kevin Rudd, and partly because of the unrest over John Howard's leadership that had emerged within the government's ranks in the lead up to the election.

Table 27.6 shows very clearly that the Labor Party's bid for election was boosted by the ascension of Rudd to the leadership. On a scale where zero represents a strong dislike, 5 represents a neutral position and 10 represents a strong liking for the leader, Rudd's mean rating was 6.3, which is higher than any leader recorded in the elections studies since the beginning of the 1990s (Senior and van Onselen 2008, 234) and has echoes of the popularity of Bob Hawke in his heyday in the 1980s. Howard was a full 1.2 points behind on the scale at 5.1. In his own right, Howard was not unpopular with the electorate, but his average rating was only just over the neutral point of 5 and his level of popularity had certainly declined since the previous election, when it sat at 5.7 (Bean and McAllister 2005, 327). Voter reaction to Howard was more strongly divided than for Rudd, or any other leader (as shown by the standard deviation figures). The contrast between the two leaders is reinforced by the figures for the parties they led. Rudd was clearly more popular than the Labor Party, while Howard rated behind the Liberal Party.

[Table 27.6 here]

Any implication from the above discussion, however, that the coalition would have benefited from a change of leadership before the election would be misplaced. Peter Costello, the person who would certainly have replaced Howard, had the lowest rating of all the politicians measured in the survey of 4.1. Although we cannot know

how the electorate may have reacted to Costello had he taken on the role of prime minister – and there may well have been a boost to his rating – it is difficult not to conclude from the evidence to hand that the coalition would have fared even worse in the 2007 election had a successful leadership challenge been mounted. By contrast, the deputy leader of the Labor Party Julia Gillard scored well for a secondary leader, even if she rated a good way behind Rudd. The fact that Gillard’s average popularity level of 5.2 was slightly ahead of Howard’s rating meant that Labor had their two leading politicians out-scoring the government in terms of leadership popularity.

Labor’s advantage on leadership is further reinforced by the figures in Table 27.7. These show how well a list of leadership qualities was deemed to describe each of the two major party leaders. Rudd outscored Howard on all but two of the nine items on the list. Howard’s best qualities were perceived to be his intelligence, knowledge, strength of leadership and competence and it was on the last two that he outscored the leader of the opposition, though not by a large margin in either case. Rudd scored particularly well on intelligence, compassion, being sensible and knowledgeable. Rudd was thus deemed to have some of the same strengths as the prime minister, but virtually none of Howard’s weaknesses, which included not being seen as inspiring, trustworthy or honest and to a lesser extent, not being seen as compassionate. It is only with respect to being inspiring and trustworthy that voters showed even a slight amount of doubt about Rudd’s leadership qualities, although he remained far ahead of Howard on these qualities. The contrasts between perceptions of Howard and Rudd on the qualities of compassion and honesty are marked.

[Table 27.7 about here]

## **Explaining the vote**

In the final part of the analysis we bring together all of the variables we have been assessing to consider the independent impact on the 2007 vote of each one. This is achieved through multivariate analysis which estimates the net effect of each factor on the vote while controlling for all the others. The analysis includes each of the socio-demographic variables examined earlier in the chapter, the campaign issues and the summary evaluations of the major party leaders, plus party identification. The results are presented in Table 27.8 (for simplicity, only variables with statistically significant effects are shown). The appendix has the methodological details.

[Table 27.8 about here]

Of all the variables considered throughout the chapter, the only ones that had statistically significant effects on the vote in the 2007 election, net of all the other variables in the equation, were party identification, the issues of taxation, industrial relations and health, and the evaluations of Howard and Rudd. None of the social background variables had any direct impact and nor did most of the campaign issues. Indeed, certain issues that were given high importance ratings by voters, including education, management of water and the environment more generally, did not feature when it came to the acid test of a multivariate analysis.

It is difficult to deny the pre-eminent impact of party identification on Australian electoral choice. Based on the unstandardised regression coefficient for party identification in the first column of Table 27.8, we can see that coalition identifiers were 52% more likely than Labor identifiers to vote Liberal-National net of all other variables in the model. No other factor comes close to having such a large effect.



Nonetheless, the three issues of taxation, industrial relations and health and Medicare had significant effects on the vote in 2007. Interestingly, neither industrial relations nor taxation was near the top of the importance ratings for issues shown in Table 27.5. This finding reinforces the value of relating expressed voter concerns about issues directly to the vote in a multivariate analysis. The superficial ratings are not always a guide as to which issues really motivated people to vote for a particular political party. The issue with the biggest impact was industrial relations. Voters who considered industrial relations extremely important and were closer to the Liberal-National party on the issue were 15% (shown by the unstandardised regression coefficient) more likely than those who considered industrial relations extremely important and were closer to the Labor Party on the issue to vote for the coalition rather than Labor net of all other influences. This finding is not at all unexpected in light of the major focus given to industrial relations in the election campaign, revolving around debate over the government's WorkChoices policy.

There is no doubt that WorkChoices aroused a lot of feeling within the electorate. When asked how important a range of different considerations relating to the context of the 2007 election were to them in deciding how they would vote, over two-thirds (69%) of the AES sample said that 'the Howard government's WorkChoices legislation' was very or fairly important. This was in excess of 10% more than the consideration rated next most important on the list, rises in interest rates. The list also included Labor's inexperience in government, time for a change, the number of trade union leaders there would be in a Labor government and the prospect of Labor governments in Canberra and in all the states. In answer to another question elsewhere in the questionnaire, 62% of respondents said they disapproved or strongly disapproved of the changes associated with WorkChoices. It would have

been surprising had industrial relations not featured as an influence on the vote in 2007.

Though their impacts were more modest, health and taxation are the two issues that preoccupy Australian voters time and time again (see, for example, Bean and McAllister 2000; 2005). The issue importance ratings show that health is always close to the number one concern for voters, as it was this time, irrespective of how much attention the parties give to it. Taxation does not always appear initially to be of great concern to the electorate, but it repeatedly shows up as having a net impact on the vote. In this case it may have come down to voters being concerned about which party would be more likely to honour its promise of income tax cuts. The refreshing message of these findings is that voters have their own issue agendas that are not wholly determined by what the parties give most attention to during an election campaign. Lastly, it is also worth noting that another question in the 2007 AES, asking respondents to indicate which of the fourteen issues listed in Table 27.5 was most important to them during the election campaign, showed health and Medicare to be the top concern, followed by industrial relations and then taxation.

As is invariably the case, the two major party leaders also had significant effects on the 2007 vote. Those who strongly liked Howard were some 21% more likely to vote for the coalition rather than Labor compared to those who strongly disliked the prime minister. Research has shown that the prime minister of the day usually, although not always, has a larger impact than the leader of the opposition (Senior and van Onselen 2008, 231-2). Despite the intense focus on Rudd's leadership and his very high level of popularity, this was true in 2007. Perhaps surprisingly, Rudd's effect was only around half the size of Howard's. Voters who strongly liked Rudd were 12% more likely to vote Labor than those who strongly disliked the

opposition leader (the negative sign in front of the coefficient in Table 27.8 simply indicates the association with voting Labor).

In addition to estimating their impact on individual vote choice, we can also calculate the aggregate electoral impact of the significant issues and leaders and it is this that shows the role of these factors in bringing about the Labor Party's victory. The technical details of how these calculations are made are provided in the appendix. As we know from Table 27.5, Labor had a substantial advantage over the coalition on the issues of industrial relations and health and Medicare. On the other side, the coalition had a very small advantage on taxation. The combination of the balance of voter opinion strongly favouring Labor on industrial relations and the sizeable impact of that issue resulted in a net benefit to the Labor Party of 1.7% of the total vote. The issue of health and Medicare added a further 0.7% to the Labor vote. The tax issue barely pulled any gain back for the Liberal-National parties, conferring on them a net advantage of just 0.1% of the vote. With respect to leadership, while Howard was not unpopular with the electorate, nor on balance was he terribly popular, as we saw in Table 27.6. On the other hand, even though Rudd had a high popularity rating he did not have as large an impact as Howard on voting behaviour. The combination of these two factors served to keep the overall impact of leadership at modest levels. Nonetheless, Rudd's substantially greater popularity than Howard told in the end, with a net leadership effect of 1.4% to Labor. This advantage to Labor was smaller than it would have been, however, had evaluations of the leader of the opposition had a greater impact on voters.

The notable thing about this election is that virtually all of these effects favoured Labor. With only the very small effect in the other direction from the tax issue, the total combined impact of the significant issues and leader variables sums to

3.7% to the Labor Party in the Australian federal election of 2007. On its own, the issue of industrial relations accounts for a large part of this net electoral advantage. Although 1.7% may not see like a large fraction of the vote in its own right, in relative terms this is a big impact for a single issue and it underlines the pivotal nature of the government's WorkChoices policy in the 2007 election outcome. On its own this amounts to a substantial part of the 2.7% margin (in two-party preferred terms) by which the Australian Labor Party won the election and when we combine all of the effects together they more than account for the election result going so decisively to Labor.

## **Appendix**

The data forming the basis of the analysis in this chapter are from the 2007 Australian Election Study, conducted by Clive Bean, Ian McAllister and David Gow immediately following the federal election (Bean, McAllister and Gow 2008). The data come from a national survey of political attitudes and behaviour using a self-completion questionnaire mailed to respondents the day before the election held on Saturday 24 November. The survey was based on a systematic random sample of enrolled voters throughout Australia, stratified by state, drawn by the Australian Electoral Commission. Non-respondents were sent several follow-up mailings in an effort to boost the response rate and the final sample size was 1873, representing a response rate of just over 40%. The fieldwork for the study was managed by the Australian Social Science Data Archive at the Australian National University.

The analysis in Table 27.8 employs ordinary least squares regression with pairwise deletion of missing data. The dependent variable, first preference vote in the 2007 federal election, is scored 0 for Labor, 0.5 for minor parties and independent

candidates and 1 for Liberal-National. Similarly, party identification is scored 0 for Labor, 0.5 for minor parties or no party identification and 1 for Liberal-National. Apart from age, scored in years, all other independent variables are either 0-1 dummy variables or scaled to run from a low score of 0 to a high score of 1.

The issue variables are derived from a combination of the importance ratings and the party closer to the respondent, so that at one end those who rated the issue as extremely important and felt closer to the Labor Party on the issue are scored 0 and at the other end of the scale those who rated the issue as extremely important and felt closer to the coalition parties on the issue are scored 1.

The calculations showing the impact of issues on the party balance involves multiplying each unstandardised regression coefficient by the amount by which the mean of the variable deviates from the neutral point of 0.5. For taxation, the deviation was +0.01, for industrial relations it was -0.11 and for health and Medicare the deviation was -0.12.

There are several different ways of calculating leadership effects on the balance of the party vote (Senior and van Onselen 2008, 233-6). In this case both leader ratings were compared to the neutral point of 0.5 and the difference between each leader's mean rating and 0.5 was multiplied by the unstandardised regression coefficient for the leader. So, for Rudd the calculation was  $0.63 - 0.5 = 0.13 \times -0.12 = 1.6\%$  to Labor. For Howard, the calculation was  $0.51 - 0.5 = 0.01 \times 0.21 = 0.2\%$  to the coalition. The two were then added together to arrive at the net leadership impact on the vote of 1.4% to Labor.

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**Table 27.1: Voter attention to the election campaign 2001 – 2007 (percentages)**

	2001	2004	2007
Took ‘a good deal’ of interest in the election campaign overall	31	30	40
Cared ‘a good deal’ which party won	65	72	76
Paid ‘a good deal’ or ‘some’ attention to the campaign:			
- in newspapers	53	57	61
- on television	69	69	77
- on radio	43	44	50
- on the internet	-	-	16
Used the internet for election news or information	9	12	20
Watched the televised leaders’ debate	40	35	46
Thought Howard performed better in the debate	18	25	13

*Sources:* Australian Election Studies, 2001 (n=2010), 2004 (n=1769) and 2007 (n=1873).



**Table 27.2: Campaign volatility and partisan loyalty 2001 – 2007 (percentages)**

	2001	2004	2007
Decided definitely how to vote during campaign period	41	39	29
Seriously thought of giving first preference to another party in the House of Representatives during election campaign	29	25	23
Always voted for same party	48	50	45
Identifier with one of the major parties	77	77	77
Not a party identifier	15	16	16
Very strong party identifier	19	21	25

*Sources:* Australian Election Studies, 2001 (n=2010), 2004 (n=1769) and 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.3: Gender, age, residence, religion and vote at the 2007 election (percentages)**

	Labor	Lib.- Nat.	Greens	Other	(N)
<i>Gender</i>					
Male	45	44	7	4	(824)
Female	46	42	9	4	(905)
<i>Age Group</i>					
Under 25	50	36	10	4	(107)
25 to 44	46	38	13	4	(422)
45 to 64	46	43	8	4	(741)
65 and over	43	50	4	4	(387)
<i>Region</i>					
Rural	39	49	6	6	(494)
Urban	48	41	9	3	(1254)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>					
Catholic	48	42	8	3	(466)
Anglican	41	51	5	3	(414)
Uniting	39	54	3	4	(235)
Other	48	37	8	7	(220)
No religion	50	32	15	3	(399)
<i>Church Attendance</i>					
At least once a month	41	44	6	9	(307)
At least once a year	46	46	5	2	(371)
Less than once a year	46	45	7	2	(325)
Never	47	40	11	3	(728)

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.4: Education, employment and vote at the 2007 election (percentages)**

	Labor	Lib.- Nat.	Greens	Other	(N)
<i>Education</i>					
No post-school qualifications	47	44	6	3	(496)
Non-degree qualifications	43	47	6	4	(739)
University degree	47	33	16	4	(438)
<i>Occupation</i>					
Manual	55	36	5	4	(486)
Non-manual	40	46	10	4	(1078)
<i>Employment</i>					
Self-employed	30	59	9	3	(299)
Government employee	54	31	10	4	(408)
<i>Trade Union Membership</i>					
Union member	63	26	8	3	(398)
Not a union member	40	48	8	4	(1211)

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.5: Importance of election issues (percentage describing issue as extremely important) and party differential (percentage saying Labor closer on issue minus percentage saying Liberal-National closer) at the 2007 election**

Issue	Importance					Party differential
	All voters	Labor voters	Lib.- Nat. voters	Green voters	Other voters	
Taxation	39	36	45	26	30	-2
Immigration	32	30	35	24	30	+1
Education	68	77	60	68	70	+36
The environment	59	69	43	86	59	+37
Industrial relations	51	65	38	49	41	+21
Health and Medicare	76	83	70	76	73	+24
Defence and national security	40	34	49	25	41	-8
Global warming	51	63	33	82	48	+38
Management of water	70	71	66	79	64	+10
Unemployment	39	42	36	29	31	-8
Treatment of Aborigines	31	37	20	50	37	+9
Interest rates	43	44	44	26	33	-6
The war in Iraq	36	43	24	51	38	+19
Terrorism	43	38	50	19	38	-5

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.6: Summary ratings of leaders and parties at the 2007 election (means on 0-10 scale)**

Leader	Mean	Std. Dev.	Party	Mean	Std. Dev.
Kevin Rudd	6.3	2.8	Labor	5.9	3.1
John Howard	5.1	3.6	Liberal	5.3	3.4
Mark Vaile	4.6	2.2	National	4.4	2.8
Bob Brown	4.5	2.8	Greens	4.4	3.0
Peter Costello	4.1	3.1			
Julia Gillard	5.2	3.1			

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.7: Leadership qualities ascribed to John Howard and Kevin Rudd at the 2007 election (percentage saying quality describes leader extremely well or quite well)**

Quality	John Howard	Kevin Rudd
Intelligent	90	92
Compassionate	50	82
Competent	80	77
Sensible	73	82
Provides strong leadership	81	76
Honest	45	72
Knowledgeable	81	82
Inspiring	38	59
Trustworthy	41	66

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).

**Table 27.8: Multivariate analysis of significant influences on voting behaviour at the 2007 election**

	Unstandardised regression coefficient	Standardised regression coefficient
Party identification	.52	.49
Taxation	.07	.05
Industrial relations	.15	.12
Health and Medicare	.06	.05
John Howard	.21	.16
Kevin Rudd	-.12	-.08
R-squared	.76	

*Note:* Entries in the table are statistically significant at  $p < .05$  or better. Further methodological details can be found in the text and technical appendix.

*Source:* Australian Election Study, 2007 (n=1873).